

# THE MOST DARING ACT OF THE AGE

## Principles for Naval Irregular Warfare

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**A**s the American military confronts the challenges of the twenty-first century there is a great deal of discussion of counterinsurgency, hybrid conflict, and irregular warfare. In military history none of these concepts are new. Much of the recent scholarship and writing on these forms of warfare has focused on today's operations ashore, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, there are significant implications for naval warfare as well. The leaders of the sea services stated in the "Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" that "preventing wars is as important as winning wars."<sup>1</sup> If the U.S. Navy is going to embrace this belief as it sails deeper into the twenty-first century, development of naval irregular warfare will become vital to its future success and relevance.

Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote that the best use of a navy is to find and defeat an opponent's fleet, but from the earliest history of the republic the U.S. Navy has been involved in operations other than fleet-on-fleet engagements.<sup>2</sup> These irregular operations, in the "green" (littoral) and "brown" (riverine) waters of the world, have been conducted on a global scale, no matter the size or

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shape of the U.S. fleet. In 1839, during the Second Seminole War, the "Mosquito Fleet," under the command of Lieutenant John McLaughlin, conducted joint counterinsurgency operations in the Everglades, working with Army units.<sup>3</sup> For almost half a century shallow-draft American gunboats patrolled the rivers of China, before being organized into the Yangtze Patrol Force in 1921.<sup>4</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s thousands of sailors served in the Coastal Surveillance Force

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(Task Force 115), the River Patrol Force (TF 116), and the Mobile Riverine Force (TF 117), conducting brown- and green-water operations and counterinsurgency missions along the coasts of South Vietnam.<sup>5</sup> These are just a few examples, taken from the long history of irregular warfare in the U.S. Navy.

In January 2010 the Chief of Naval Operations released “The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges.”<sup>6</sup> The document recognizes the need to “define the strategic and operational tenets and approaches for our navy to apply across our general purpose and special operation forces.” These tenets and approaches must be founded in the historical lessons of over two centuries of irregular U.S. naval operations. The current counterinsurgency doctrine developed jointly by the Army and Marine Corps takes great pains to study and embrace the history of the mission.<sup>7</sup> As the Navy comes to terms with its role in modern, asymmetric conflict, it too will return to its past.

In early 1804 the United States found itself embroiled in the first foreign test of American power and resolve, a test that it was failing. After a single irregular-warfare mission, however, everything changed. A bold raid led by Lieutenant Stephen Decatur against Tripoli harbor to burn the captured frigate USS *Philadelphia* changed the direction of the conflict and raised American prestige throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. Admiral Horatio Nelson, who was in command of the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean at the time, called the attack “the most daring act of the age.” This example of early American irregular warfare can suggest important principles for the twenty-first century as the Navy looks to redevelop its ability to conduct asymmetric missions.

## DISAPPOINTMENTS AND DEBACLES

It did not take long after gaining its independence for the United States to become involved in its first overseas conflict. At the turn of the nineteenth century the northern coast of Africa—the Barbary Coast, as it was known—was made up of the sultanate of Morocco and the regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, all of which owed allegiance in one form or another to the Ottoman Empire. These tributaries, for the most part autonomous, were the homes of a developed culture of piracy and slave trade that stretched as far back as the fall of the Roman Empire. During the eighteenth century over 150,000 European Christians had been captured into slavery or held for ransom by the Barbary powers. By the time of the American Revolution a well established system of tribute was in existence by which the trading nations of Europe paid “tribute,” protection money, to the Barbary rulers in exchange for the safety of their merchant ships. The corsairs of the Barbary Coast, entrepreneurial men of the sea, recognized that now that the United States was free from Great Britain, American merchant ships no longer fell under the protection of the Royal Navy or the tribute paid by the

British Crown. Mediterranean raiders from the Ottoman tributaries of North Africa fell upon the extensive American merchant trade that passed near their shores, taking ships and cargo as booty and sailors for ransom.<sup>8</sup>

In May 1801, the pasha of Tripoli made it official when, after demanding over two hundred thousand dollars in tribute, he declared war on the United States of America. In response President Thomas Jefferson sent a series of naval squadrons to the Mediterranean to protect American merchant shipping. The first deployment, which began in 1801 under Commodore Richard Dale, was marked by frustration and failure. The force, termed a “Peace Establishment,” operated under strict rules of engagement. American warships were allowed to intervene only when they directly witnessed an attack on an American merchant by a corsair.<sup>9</sup> The primary success of the squadron came at Gibraltar, where it discovered Tripoli’s naval commander anchored there with two vessels. Dale ordered Captain Samuel Baron to lie off the harbor with USS *Philadelphia*, bottling up the small Tripolitan force. The corsairs eventually gave up waiting for *Philadelphia* to leave, dismantled their ships, and discharged their crews.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Dale dispersed his three other ships across the Mediterranean, where they conducted convoys and cruised singly for corsairs. In the end they had little to show.

A second mission left Hampton Roads in 1802, under the command of Commodore Richard Morris. Although the president and Congress had relaxed the rules of engagement, “Morris’ squadron behaved more like a touring company than a naval force.”<sup>11</sup> Morris brought his wife along for the trip and spent plenty of time ashore with family. William Eaton, the American consul at Tunis (who would in 1805 lead the American attack on Derna), asked in a letter, “What have they [the squadron’s crews] done but dance and wench?”<sup>12</sup> Morris’s deployment was even less successful operationally than Dale’s, despite having more ships and its more aggressive rules of engagement. This inactivity and reports of the squadron’s behavior that reached Washington resulted in Morris’s relief and official censure. In 1803 Commodore Edward Preble was dispatched to the Mediterranean with a third American squadron.<sup>13</sup>

The first great challenge that Preble encountered was the capture by Tripolitan forces of the forty-four-gun frigate *Philadelphia* under Captain William Bainbridge while negotiating with the Moroccans. In November 1803 Bainbridge had spotted a coastal raiding craft “very near the shore” running toward the harbor of Tripoli.<sup>14</sup> *Philadelphia* gave chase, and the vessel hoisted Tripolitan colors. Bainbridge ran in as close to shore as he felt comfortable, carefully checking his charts, which indicated forty-two feet of water beneath his keel. As the Tripolitan ship neared the entrance to the harbor *Philadelphia* was obliged to bear off the wind, allowing the Tripolitan to escape, and ran aground on unmarked rocks in twelve feet of water.<sup>15</sup>

The Americans were unable to refloat the ship, even after casting the ballast and the majority of the guns overboard and cutting away the foremast. Gun-boats sailed from Tripoli harbor and began to shell the grounded ship. According to the ship's officers, "every exertion was made, and every expedient tried, to get her off and defend her."<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, fearing for the safety of his crew as the enemy shells began to gain accuracy, Bainbridge surrendered his command to the Tripolitans. Local knowledge of the tides and currents allowed the enemy to float the ship and carry its prize and three hundred prisoners into Tripoli.<sup>17</sup>

Preble was faced with a difficult situation. The international prestige of the United States, and the Navy in particular, plummeted after the capture of *Philadelphia*. After the bumbling of the first two squadrons, American naval leadership appeared at best foolish, at worst incompetent. Preble was faced with two choices: either to mount an invasion of the city of Tripoli to retake *Philadelphia* and free Bainbridge and the prisoners or to develop a plan to destroy the frigate at its mooring in Tripoli harbor.

Reports indicated that *Philadelphia* lay deep in the harbor, "within pistol shot of the whole of the Tripolitan *marine*, mounting altogether upward of one hundred pieces of heavy cannon, and within the immediate protection of formidable land batteries, consisting of one hundred and fifteen pieces of heavy artillery."<sup>18</sup> In the harbor a mixed fleet of nineteen gunboats, two schooners, two galleys, and a brig, with over a thousand Tripolitan sailors, lay at anchor or were moored to the quay. It was also estimated that the guns of the harbor fortress were supported by twenty-five thousand troops encamped in the city. Preble's squadron at the time was made up of only seven ships and eight gunboats. Including the small detachments of U.S. Marines on board he could muster a total of 1,060 men.<sup>19</sup> Preble realized that there was little chance of success in mounting an invasion of the pasha's regency with the forces he had at his disposal.

### A BOLD YOUNG OFFICER

The solution to the capture of *Philadelphia* came in the form of irregular warfare. Lieutenant Stephen Decatur, in command of the fourteen-gun schooner USS *Enterprise*, had recently captured a small Tripolitan ketch, *Mastico*. Originally built as a bomb ketch for Napoleon's 1798 invasion of Egypt, the small vessel had been purchased by Tripolitan merchants and converted to a commercial vessel; now, it easily blended with local craft.<sup>20</sup> Its capture was still recent and likely to be unknown in Tripoli's harbor. Decatur saw an opportunity.

The young lieutenant approached the commodore in the squadron's Sicilian base at Syracuse, where the flagship, USS *Constitution*, and *Enterprise* were both in port. Sending the American squadron in close enough to ensure the *Philadelphia*'s destruction by bombardment would place its ships in too great a danger

from the massed enemy guns. Nor did the Americans have enough force for a full assault on the city. Decatur suggested that, with men from *Enterprise* as crew, the captured ketch could slip into Tripoli's harbor, then board and recapture *Philadelphia*.<sup>21</sup> Once he was in control of *Philadelphia* the lieutenant intended to sail it clear of the harbor and back into the service of the United States.

Preble considered the plan of the promising young officer and realized that it just might work. On 31 January 1804 the commodore renamed the captured ketch *Intrepid* and ordered Decatur to take command of an expedition against Tripoli harbor. Decatur was authorized to load stores for thirty days and draw a crew of seventy-five sailors and Marines. Preble instructed Decatur to take only volunteers, for the mission would be dangerous; he sent him five midshipmen from *Constitution*, as well as the flagship's Italian pilot. He also ordered the brig USS *Syren*, sixteen guns, commanded by Lieutenant Charles Stewart, to accompany Decatur and provide support as required. The commodore was clear in the purpose of the mission: he wanted *Philadelphia* destroyed—not recovered, as Decatur had proposed. His formal orders to Decatur stated, "The destruction of the *Philadelphia* is an object of great importance"; they gave strict instructions that "after the ship is well on fire, [Decatur was to] point two of the eighteen-pounders, shotted, down the main hatch, and blow her bottom out."<sup>22</sup> Attempting to sail the frigate clear of the harbor would pose too great a risk to his men, no matter how gallantly they were led.

Decatur took two days to load the stores, weapons, and explosives before *Intrepid* set sail in the company of *Syren*. The sixty-ton bomb ketch, designed as a coaster and generally unfit for long, blue-water voyages, had a difficult 250-nautical-mile crossing. Also, the men aboard *Intrepid* discovered, after they were under way, that many of the stores they had been issued were putrid and unusable. On 7 February, as they approached the North African coast, a gale struck the two American ships; *Intrepid*'s small size and poor construction nearly doomed the expedition. They survived the storm and the poor provisions, but word now spread that the force might have been discovered. The confidence of the men was severely tested. Lewis Heermann, a Navy surgeon asked by Decatur to join the mission, wrote later that among the men these challenges "laid the foundation of apprehensions of eventual failure."<sup>23</sup>

### A DARING ATTACK

On 16 February, under a noonday sun, *Intrepid* approached within sight of Tripoli harbor. The weather had improved following the gale, but the horizon did not look promising and the crew suspected a second storm was coming. Decatur called a council of his officers to discuss their situation: dwindling stores, poor weather approaching, and a crew that was beginning to lose morale. They came

to the conclusion that they could not wait for *Syren*, which had separated from *Intrepid* after the storm and agreed to meet later that evening with boats to help screen *Intrepid*'s retreat after the mission. The winds were favorable for both a smooth entry into and exit from the harbor, and the storm clouds appeared to be a day off. Decatur ordered his crew to clear the decks and make ready for battle.

The men concealed themselves, mostly below, and at nightfall *Intrepid* made its approach into the harbor. Salvatore Catalano, the Italian pilot sent by Preble, had sailed the Mediterranean for decades and knew the harbor well. He guided the ketch through the anchored ships, the relatively massive hull of *Philadelphia* easily visible in the lights of the city. As *Intrepid* approached the frigate a sentry called out; Catalano called back in a local language, a Mediterranean sailor's patois of mixed dialects, and talked the vessel alongside. *Intrepid* made fast to *Philadelphia*, and the Americans struck.

The boarding party, made up of sixty sailors and Marines, poured from below decks and scaled the side of the frigate. Midshipman Richard Morris, who would later command USS *Adams* in the War of 1812 and be promoted to commodore, was the first to reach *Philadelphia*'s deck, "in a spirit of gallant emulation," followed closely by Midshipman Thomas MacDonough, who was to be the hero of the battle of Lake Champlain.<sup>24</sup> The Americans fell upon the Tripolitan guards with swords and knives, under strict orders from Decatur not to use firearms, for fear of alerting the rest of the harbor. The attack went like clockwork, as each of the men went rapidly about his assigned task. Twenty guards were killed, and one was taken prisoner; the men then began setting up the combustibles. Several Tripolitans, however, had escaped in a boat that was moored on the opposite side from *Intrepid* or had jumped overboard; the alarm went out across the harbor, and the fortress opened fire.<sup>25</sup>

Catalano glanced around the harbor. The winds continued to favor their escape; the tides, current, and layout of the harbor were better than he had anticipated. He found Decatur and explained that they might be able to bring the frigate safely out of the harbor after all, even without its foremast and with only a skeleton crew. The lieutenant, however, had his orders.<sup>26</sup> *Philadelphia*—which his father, Captain Stephen Decatur, Sr., had commissioned in 1801—had to be destroyed.

Decatur ordered fires set in the storerooms, gun room, cockpit, and berth deck. The lieutenant ordered the men back aboard *Intrepid* as cannon shot from the fortress flew overhead. The rapidly spreading flames poured from the hatches and ports as Decatur himself crossed back to the ketch. When he cast off, the fire had begun to climb the frigate's rigging. Under Catalano's guidance *Intrepid* began to make its way to the channel, firing its four guns and muskets.

As *Intrepid* cleared the harbor it was joined by *Syren*'s boats, which had followed orders despite *Intrepid*'s earlier than expected attack and now covered the escape. *Philadelphia*, engulfed in flames and its cable burned through, drifted through the harbor, finally coming to rest against the fortress.<sup>27</sup> In the confusion there was little attempt to chase the escaping Americans. *Syren*'s men augmented the crew of *Intrepid* and transferred fresh stores as a gale began to close in. Together the American ships weathered the storm and began the long transit back to Syracuse.

### NAVAL IRREGULAR WARFARE

Alfred Thayer Mahan taught naval officers that “the study of history lies at the foundation of all sound military conclusions and practice.”<sup>28</sup> While Decatur’s daring attack on Tripoli harbor cannot be exactly duplicated in modern naval operations, there are principles of naval irregular warfare that can be derived from the episode. As the Navy attempts to move forward with its “vision for confronting irregular challenges,” it is important that historical principles become part of the discussion. Important as they could be to the success of future operations, however, these historical principles should not be considered rules or equations that will guarantee successful results. Principles determined from history are, as Mahan suggested, “not so much fetters, or bars, which compel [our] movements aright, as guides which warn when [we are] going wrong.”<sup>29</sup>

It has been suggested that Decatur’s raid can be seen as the Navy’s first “special operation.” This is not the case according to today’s doctrine, which defines special operations and special warfare as “operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or informational objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas.”<sup>30</sup> While the mission was certainly unconventional and aimed to achieve a military objective in a hostile area, it was not carried out by a “specially organized, trained, and equipped” force. The crew of *Intrepid* was made up of volunteers hastily gathered from other American naval vessels. They brought with them standard training in early nineteenth-century naval warfare and had no specially designed equipment. The mission, then, is best classified as “irregular warfare” rather than an example of “special operations.”

The strike against *Philadelphia* can be described as a “cutting-out expedition.” These missions were not uncommon in the age of sail, and numerous examples can be drawn from American naval history. In 1778 Captain John Paul Jones, commanding USS *Ranger*, attempted to capture HMS *Drake* while at anchor in the roads at Carrickfergus, Ireland.<sup>31</sup> In 1812 Lieutenant Jesse Elliot would cut out the brigs *Detroit* and *Caledonia* in one of the first naval operations

on the Great Lakes during the War of 1812.<sup>32</sup> These missions were not traditional, open-water ship duels or squadron engagements. However, they were conducted by what today would be called a “general-purpose force,” making them perfect examples of irregular warfare in the early American period.

The first principle of naval irregular warfare that is demonstrated by Decatur’s raid emerges from the fact that *Intrepid*’s expedition was part of a conventional operation and was directly supported by regular naval forces. The Tripolitan corsairs refused squadron-level engagements and frequently ran from single-ship battles as well. The American squadron in the Mediterranean had established local command of the sea.<sup>33</sup> Decatur’s chances of success were much higher because of the local dominance established by Preble’s conventional naval forces.

More directly, without the assistance of USS *Syren* the mission would likely have failed. Most of the combustibles used to burn *Philadelphia* were prepared aboard *Syren* and transferred to *Intrepid* for the attack.<sup>34</sup> The larger warship stood by to provide protection during *Intrepid*’s escape and support during the storms that they soon encountered. Commodore Preble wrote in his reports that *Syren* had been vital to the success and that Lieutenant Stewart’s “conduct through the expedition has been judicious and highly meritorious.”<sup>35</sup>

Naval irregular warfare, then, while it can be carried out by special operations forces, is an appropriate and important mission for conventional naval forces. It requires fleet support, but at the same time it directly contributes to the fleet’s mission.

When applying this principle to modern naval affairs it is important to highlight the balance required. A fleet must be able to achieve and maintain command of the sea. However, it is just as important to be able to use that command once achieved—for, among other vital purposes, irregular warfare. As Sir Julian Corbett pointed out in *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, naval forces are key elements of limited wars, which commonly require irregular capabilities.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. Navy has worked to expand its irregular-warfare capability, forming for that purpose the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). But some members of the Navy seem to believe that this simple organizational act is “the answer”—that irregular warfare can simply be left to forward-deployed sailors from NECC. Its personnel, in fact, often feel cut off from the greater Navy. NECC cannot do it alone; the support, and even conduct, of naval irregular warfare by the general-purpose force is critical to “leveraging the maritime domain.”<sup>37</sup> Rear Admiral Phillip Greene, the director of the Navy Irregular Warfare Office, has written in an “op-ed” piece on the website *Defense News*, “What is often described as irregular warfare is actually part of the regular mission set for the Navy.”<sup>38</sup>

The type of ship used in the attack points to a second principle of naval irregular warfare. *Mastico*, as *Intrepid* had been named prior to its capture, was maintained according to what today are called “commercial standards,” for merchant service along the coastal littorals and shallows of North Africa. While armed, it did not carry the heavy armament of a warship; neither did it have the heavy displacement or deep draft that would have limited its ability to escape from Tripoli harbor. The grounding of *Philadelphia* demonstrated the risks of using large warships, designed for fleet engagement, in the littorals.

*Intrepid* had its own limitations. Its construction quality and its design as a coaster created risk when it crossed the open Mediterranean during storm season. Twice storms nearly swamped it. *Intrepid*’s light armament required the commodore to send *Syren* for fire support. Vessels designed to operate close to shore or that offer amphibious capability are vital to irregular warfare but are risky to use for traditional open-water missions or in the line of battle; they must be used judiciously.

“The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges” calls for new platforms and systems, and in turn a reallocation of resources, to conduct irregular warfare properly.<sup>39</sup> There appears to be a willingness to make the required changes to acquisitions plans. Changes that merit more study and possibly some form of implementation, if the Navy takes irregular warfare seriously, might be along the lines of “Influence Squadrons” or the “New Navy Fighting Machine.”<sup>40</sup> Also, the Navy frequently highlights the multimission capabilities of the *Arleigh Burke*–class guided-missile destroyer (DDG), arguing that the vessels could serve the fleet’s irregular-warfare requirement.<sup>41</sup> At the dawn of the nineteenth century too the U.S. Navy had a large, multimission vessel that was technologically advanced and the envy of other nations—Joshua Humphreys’s “fast frigates.”<sup>42</sup> However, USS *Philadelphia* was one of those frigates; Decatur’s raid was necessary because large, multimission combatants are not always the answer for fighting in the littorals. The new Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) is a start, a recognition that equipment and shipbuilding are important to meeting irregular-warfare challenges, but not the end.

A third principle of naval irregular warfare is that a particular quality of leadership is needed—“empowered” and aggressive junior officers. Stephen Decatur was one of several rising lieutenants whom senior officers and government officials considered as the “young officers” who would perpetuate “the glory and triumphs of the American flag.”<sup>43</sup> Less than five years prior to the burning of *Philadelphia* he had been promoted from midshipman. He had been in command of small vessels for less than two years when he approached Commodore Preble with his plan. That is, Stephen Decatur had nothing to lose by suggesting

this irregular mission—he was years away from consideration for further promotion that might have been jeopardized by a failure.

Junior officers have frequently been sources of innovation and creativity, but today there is a temptation, due to modern communications and information technology, for senior commanders to take larger roles at the tactical level. P. W. Singer has written about the “rise of the tactical general,” warning of its negative impact on initiative and effectiveness.<sup>44</sup> Due to the very nature of irregular missions—dispersed but part of a larger plan—it is vital that creative problem solving and leadership among junior officers be encouraged and rewarded. Whether the leader of a boarding team off the coast of the Somalia or a helicopter aircraft commander conducting counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean, tactical leaders’ actions can have strategic effects in so-called hybrid conflicts. If these “strategic junior officers” are micromanaged, they will lose initiative, and the effectiveness of irregular warfare will suffer.

Besides the temptation of modern technology to micromanagement, the direction of force structure and shipbuilding also appears to be limiting the development of daring and capable junior officers. The intention to replace the Navy’s patrol craft and minesweepers with the LCS has removed the last opportunity for command at sea for lieutenants and lieutenant commanders. The LCS, deemed too valuable to entrust to such inexperienced officers, will be assigned to officers in the grade of commander. Generations of senior naval officers have learned to balance aggressive leadership and risk from their experience in command of small ships—not just Stephen Decatur but also Chester Nimitz and the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen.<sup>45</sup> At a time when some serving and retired officers feel that the Navy’s leadership culture is taking risk-aversion to an extreme, daring and creative junior officers are unlikely to survive failure or to be rewarded for success.<sup>46</sup>

A fourth and final principle of naval irregular warfare is that local and cultural knowledge, whether from members of the U.S. Navy or through local partnership, is vital for the success of missions like Decatur’s raid. Without Salvatore Catalano and his knowledge of the local customs and language, it would have been nearly impossible for *Intrepid* to get alongside *Philadelphia* without raising an alarm first. Catalano was a Sicilian merchant seaman, a native of Palermo, who had worked the routes between Tripoli and Malta for over a decade.<sup>47</sup> His firsthand knowledge of the tricky shoals and shallows of Tripoli harbor was coupled with his mastery of the local maritime dialect, a mix of Arabic, Berber, and other Mediterranean languages. He had served as a pilot aboard *Constitution* and *Enterprise*, with the blessing of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. During the Barbary Wars the cooperation of the Sicilians and the British at Gibraltar and Malta represented key partnerships for the Americans, providing not only

secure supply bases but also gunboats that would be used in Commodore Preble's attack on Tripoli later in 1804.<sup>48</sup>

Today the employment of local sailors like Catalano offers an option, one that underlines the importance of maintaining theater-security relationships around the globe. Partnership with local forces can produce the knowledge necessary for success. A second source of this important knowledge is cultural expertise from the U.S. military's intelligence and foreign-area-officer communities. These specialists are growing in numbers and are vital to the planning and execution of irregular missions. These communities must continue to grow in order to support ships that are headed to theaters where irregular missions can be expected. Irregular-warfare missions are frequently joint affairs as well, as seen in the early demonstration of the "Navy–Marine Corps team" in Decatur's raid. While there may be no naval unit with the specialization or local knowledge required for a particular mission, experts from the other services or interagency resources may be able to provide them.

### NAVAL IRREGULAR WARFARE: PAST AND PRESENT

When the Chief of Naval Operations released "The U.S. Navy's Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges" he called on the service to identify and develop the doctrine, tactics, and equipment required to face the asymmetric challenges of the twenty-first century. An examination of America's naval past provides numerous examples of naval irregular warfare. American naval strategy prior to the Spanish-American War was not based on the decisive fleet engagement but on gunboat diplomacy, blockade, commerce raiding, riverine campaigns, and amphibious warfare. In the twenty-first-century context of naval power, much of America's early naval heritage would be considered irregular warfare or a hybrid of irregular and conventional campaigns.

In order to develop modern irregular-warfare strategies and operations successfully, the U.S. Navy needs to look to the past. The First Barbary War demonstrates four important principles for success in irregular warfare. It must be part of a greater naval strategy and be supported by regular forces. Vessels must be suited to the littoral environment, where these missions commonly occur. Leadership at a low level in the chain of command will ensure that missions do not become encumbered with oversight that can disrupt the effectiveness of the unit on scene. Finally, local cultural knowledge or partnership will help ensure that the specific expertise required for mission accomplishment is available. By remembering these principles as it plans for irregular-warfare missions and campaigns, the U.S. Navy will be better prepared to engage in the asymmetric and hybrid conflicts of the twenty-first century.

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33. This was not accomplished through American work alone; the support of the Royal Navy was important to American success. By allowing the U.S. Navy to use Gibraltar and Sicily as bases and by making it clear to corsairs that the British and Americans had common cause, the Royal Navy helped make the American achievement of local command of the sea possible.

34. Edmund P. Kennedy, affidavit, 10 March 1828, *Documents*, p. 27.

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36. Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green, 1918), p. 43.

37. U.S. Navy Dept., "U.S. Navy's Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges," p. 4.

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39. U.S. Navy Dept., "U.S. Navy's Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges," p. 6.

40. Henry J. Hendrix, "Buy Fords, Not Ferraris," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 135, no. 4 (April 2009). "The New Navy Fighting Machine," developed by Capt. Wayne Hughes, USN (Ret.), was the result of a Naval Post-graduate School/Office of Net Assessment study.

41. For an example see the discussion of DDGs in an interview with Rear Adm. Phillip Greene, Richard R. Burgess, "Interview: Controlling Chaos," *Seapower* 53, no. 3 (March 2010), p. 36.

42. For a modern discussion of Joshua Humphreys and his designs see Ian W. Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

43. M. M. Noah, statement of 8 November 1826, *Documents*, p. 18.

44. P. W. Singer, "Essay: The Rise of the Tactical General," *Armed Forces Journal* (June 2009), available at [www.armedforcesjournal.com/](http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/).

45. Midshipman (later Ensign) Nimitz commanded in 1907 the gunboat *Panay* (not the gunboat of that name sunk by the Japanese in 1937). In 1908, in a double historical irony, he took command of the destroyer *Decatur* and ran it aground entering Manila Bay; his career survived the ensuing court-martial. Lieutenant Mullen assumed command of the gasoline tanker USS *Noxubee* (AOG 56) in 1973.

46. For discussions of risk aversion in today's Navy see Christopher P. Cavas, "Why No One Believes the Navy: USN Leaders Have Growing Disconnect with Congress, Fleet," *Defense News*, 26 May 2008, available at [www.defensenews.com/](http://www.defensenews.com/), and J. M. Van Tol, "Worse than a Crime: A Mistake," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 134, no. 5 (May 2008).

47. "Obituary of Salvatore M. Catalano," *Washington, D.C., Daily National Intelligencer*, (Washington, D.C.) 1 January 1846, available at [www.genealogytrails.com/](http://www.genealogytrails.com/).

48. Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, p. 366.